

# The International Institute of Agriculture

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**ADDRESS BY HON. SYDNEY FISHER**

**Minister of Agriculture**

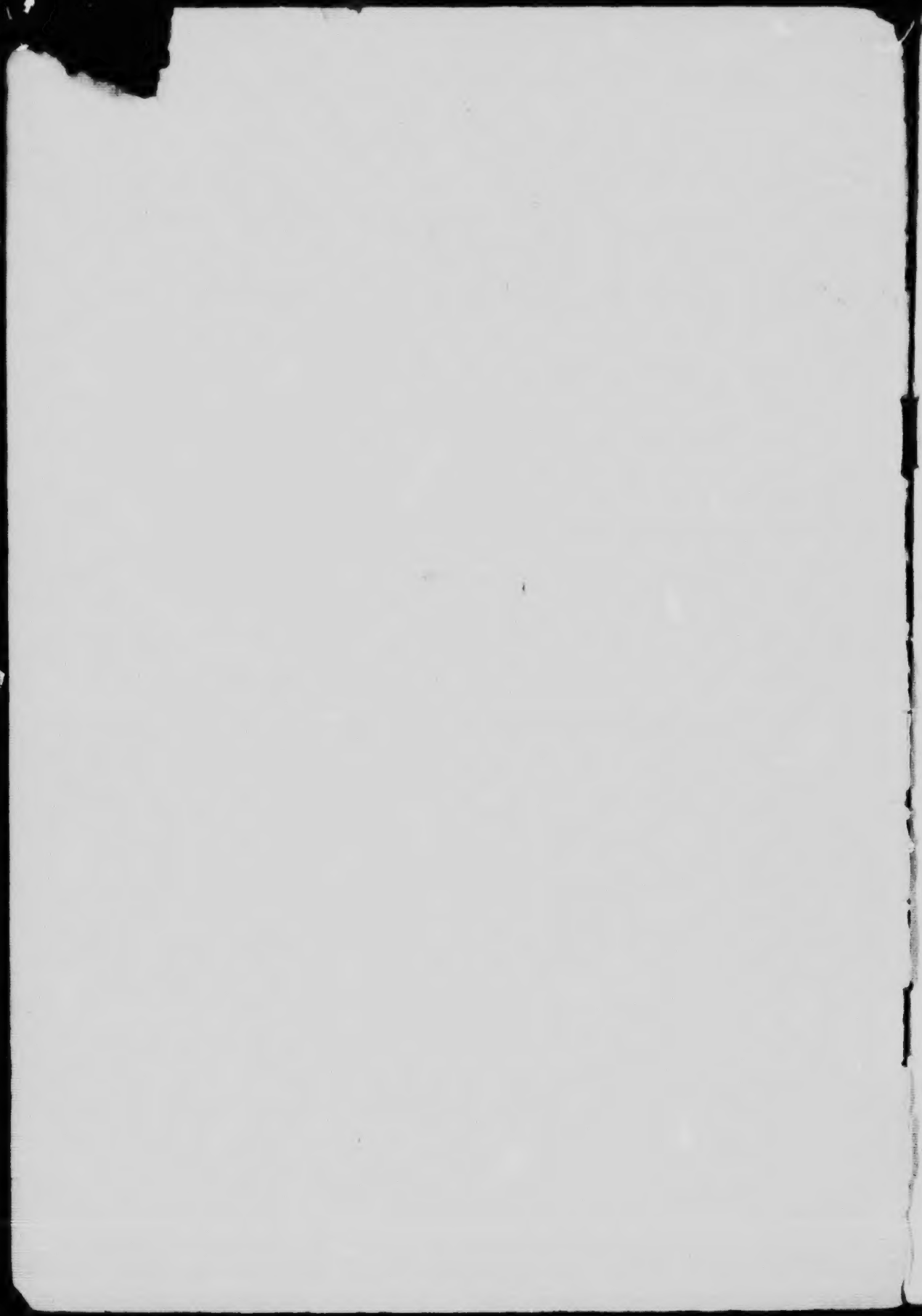
**Before the Canadian Club of Montreal, Monday,  
December 20th, 1909**

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The International Institute of Agriculture is an organization specially formed for the purpose of establishing a sort of clearing house of agricultural information and investigation—an International Clearing House.

A word about the history of its formation. The idea was originated in the mind of David Lubin, an American citizen of San Francisco, who, some years ago made a large sum of money, and became struck with certain things affecting the agricultural interests of the world, especially its food producing interests. He believed there was an opportunity for international work along this line. While traveling in Europe he attracted the attention of leading citizens of Italy to this subject, and eventually, that of King Victor Emmanuel III. of Italy, a man of wide interests. The King seized upon this subject as one capable of wide development for the good of his own country as well as others. As a result he issued through his foreign minister invitations to the great States of the world to a conference which was held at Rome in the spring of 1905. The British Empire was represented by Lords Jersey and Minto and Sir Thomas Elliott, the permanent head of the department of agriculture at London.

Over thirty states were represented and as a result of the conference there was formulated a scheme for an International Institute which was submitted to the governments with an invitation to join the Institute. The British government accepted the invitation, and also asked that its Dominions beyond the seas be included, and an opportunity given Canada, Australia, South Africa, India and Egypt, under the aegis of the British flag to form part of this Institute. The result was that in 1906 the government of Canada received an invitation through the British Colonial office to join the Institute, and this invitation was accepted early in 1907.

The powers agreed to the general scheme of the Institute and its first general assembly was held in Rome about a year ago. I considered the matter of sufficient importance to warrant finding out the full scope of this Institute, and so went to Rome to represent the Canadian Government at that meeting.

The general scheme was formulated by a committee which had been appointed earlier, at which we were represented by Dr. Rutherford, head of the Veterinary Branch of my Department. This scheme was submitted to the general assembly and adopted. It provided for the election of a president, first and second Vice-presidents, secretaries, etc. Signor Tittoni, then minister of foreign affairs for Italy, who was chairman of the first conference in 1905, was chosen president, and as representative from the New World of an English-speaking country, I was chosen first vice-president. Dr. Yermoloff, of the agricultural department of the Russian Empire, was chosen second vice-president, and Mr. Koch, of the Italian State department at Rome, Secretary.

The scheme of organization as presented was accepted with slight modifications. It involves the appointment of a permanent committee which shall have management of the details, with its own president, vice-president and secretary. This again is divided into three committees, of which the three chairmen with the president and vice-president form the executive. Count Faina, an Italian senator, was chosen president of the permanent committee. Mr. Louis Dopp of the Department of Finance and Agriculture of France, vice-president : Mr. Michalos, a Hungarian senator and large land owner was chosen chairman of the first committee. Dr. Müller, of the German Department of Agriculture, chairman of the second committee, and Hon. Arthur Boyer, of Montreal, chairman of the third, so Canada was well represented. I feel a certain pride in the place and role Canada has taken in this organization. Aside from the personnel of those chosen, it is a recognition of the New World and of the important position Canada occupies in the great world.

Now, as to the aims of this Institute. I spoke of it as an international clearing house of agricultural statistics and information. I will go back to the three committees of the permanent committee to explain its work. The first committee is a secretariat and does the work of managing the organization and work of the offices at Rome. The second is the committee on agriculture and statistical information, and is charged with the work of organizing a statistical

bureau, where statistical information from all over the world regarding agriculture will be collected, compiled, elaborated and distributed to the countries adhering to the Institute. The third committee, of which Hon. Arthur Boyer is chairman, deals with the economics of agriculture, its influence and effect upon the social system, with agriculture in different countries and the advance of agricultural science and discoveries, as well as agricultural associations and co-operation.

I think this covers fairly well the work of the organization. After the general assembly last year the officers were appointed to the various positions. Mr. Koch, secretary of the first assemblies was appointed first-chief clerk in the first division of the secretariat, and has charge of the offices and staff and routine work of the offices at Rome.

Mr. Clarke, who has been a long time in charge of the bureau of statistics at Washington was chosen chief of the second division, and will, therefore, have to formulate and organize the scheme of securing statistics from all over the world, their compilation and elaboration and distribution to the countries adhering to the Institute.

Mr. Braffard, from Belgium, was appointed chief of the third division. He was permanent head of the department of agriculture of Belgium, with long experience in agricultural work, and had also been a member of the Belgium Legislature. His work will be to deal with economic questions connected with agriculture, such as agricultural associations, co-operation, agricultural scientific investigation and discoveries.

In this way the whole field of agricultural interest is pretty well covered by the organization and its work.

There was some discussion as to where the information should be obtained and what information would be acceptable. The principle was laid down that this should be an Institute of Governments, not of the people. It would secure information which would have the imprimatur of the governments adhering, so that we could have complete confidence in the information supplied.

When Mr. Libin first started the idea he was stimulated by the fact, well-known and admitted, that a great deal of the reports in regard to agricultural information and the state of the crops and market prospects for food products of the world is supplied to the



people through the press, which again is supplied by interested parties, with the result that they, the consuming people of the world, really have no confidence in the information supplied them. And in many cases, no doubt, this information has been manipulated in the interests of stock jobbing and rigging the markets in the interests of the rise and fall in value of the main staple of food of the masses of the people, in a manner detrimental to the consumers of that food.

It was, therefore, considered essential that the information should be of value and that to inspire confidence it should come from some responsible source, and it was considered that this could only be secured by getting the information from the responsible governments. Therefore, the information will be that secured by the statistical departments of the various countries. This information must be gathered as rapidly as possible. It will be of two kinds. Current information, week by week and month by month through the year and then final information of actual and established results.

For instance, at Ottawa we issue a monthly bulletin from the Department of Agriculture with estimates and information with regard to the condition of the crops in Canada. It comes out on the 10th or 12th of each month and gives the information secured during the previous month to the end of the month—that is current information. As soon as we have any definite information, say about June, we can tell absolutely the amount of land sown in Canada to any particular crop and can issue an accurate statement. Later on we can tell the quantity of hay collected and give an accurate statement. Later, we can give accurate statements as to the grain crops, and later still as to the roots. But during the whole season we can give information and estimates as to the condition of these crops, upon which can be based fair estimates for the final production of the year.

This is the kind of information to be secured from the different countries, and as soon as it is compiled and elaborated it will be sent to the different countries adhering. We, therefore, in Canada will not only know through our department the condition of our own crops month by month and the results of the harvest, but will get the same information from all these other countries, and practically all the important countries of the world that adhere to the Institute. So this will be a real clearing house of agricultural information.

In addition, we, in Canada, as an agricultural country, are developing rapidly, trying experiments and doing work here which may

be taken by some countries as a model and example for the development of new lands. I am rather proud of the fact that to-day our sister Dominions, Australia, South Africa, India and other parts of the Empire, and even the Mother Country herself, are constantly sending to Canada agricultural experts to get hints and information regarding the kind of work that is being done in Canada to serve for instruction and models in their own lands.

Other countries can give us similar information. But I am afraid we are rather conceited people and have a good opinion of ourselves. There was a time not long ago when we were very modest, lacking in self-confidence, and inclined to look to the United States for everything good and great on the American Continent. We have got over that. While not too boastful or proud I am glad we have left some of that modesty aside, and that the Canadian people to-day are self-confident and able to do things for themselves, and perhaps for the world at large.

In agricultural matters, however, we can learn a great deal yet from the older countries. We have a good deal of practical information within our borders, but there is a vast amount of scientific information the older lands can offer us to help and guide us in practical work.

In addition to statistical information the Institute will get from all countries regular reports of all that is going on in the agricultural world and reports of scientific investigation and discoveries, and reports of experiments which are being carried on in hundreds and hundreds of experimental stations, not only in the new but in the old world, which can afford us a safe and sound guide in agricultural work. The Institute will be a centre to which all of this will come, and the result of this information, properly collated, will be of great value to Canada.

The King of Italy is very much interested in this work, and it is small wonder he should be. We are inclined on this continent to look upon Italy as an old land. It is a very old civilization, but it is a land which to-day is flowing with milk and honey—a great agricultural land from which we here in our youth can learn a great deal. We spread ourselves over a great deal of land, and do not do either ourselves or the land justice—our methods are slipshod and wasteful. True we get big results, but for a small and few people to spread themselves over millions of acres of this Dominion it would be impossible for us to work the land intensively and scientifically and

reap the really best results from the enormous areas we possess, too much of which we sometimes attempt to till.

In the old lands they also do things on a large scale. Mr. Micklos has been farming in Hungary 15,000 acres, and has herds and flocks which would put to shame any of our western ranches in numbers as well as quality.

But where the population is more dense, as in Belgium, Holland, Germany, France and Italy, the cultivation is intensive, and they get results which put us to shame. They have methods of patient industry and scientific application to their small areas which enable them to get as much from these small acreages sometimes as we do from our broad prairies and great areas.

I had a long conversation with the King of Italy, and was surprised to find out how much in earnest he was and is in the interests of his people, and how complete his knowledge was. We went to see him, and as first vice-president I had to lead the delegation, with representatives of 40 countries speaking a dozen wholly different languages, and I am well within the mark when I say the king spoke to at least ten or twelve of these in their own tongue, and showed a knowledge of conditions in each country which surprised and delighted the representatives. He took a keen interest in this Institute, and when he undertook to establish it he also endowed it by handing over to it two large estates in northern central Italy, the revenues of which are \$60,000 a year, commencing in 1905. Thus, as the work did not start until last year, we had two year's revenue to apply to the building of a magnificent palace in the Borghesi Gardens in Rome, which will make a splendid modern building for the headquarters of the Institute.

The Institute is organized in five groups. The first group has five votes and a basis of subscription of 16 units of \$300 each a year to the objects of the Institute. The second group has 4 votes and 8 units, the third 3 votes and 4 units, the fourth 2 votes and 2 units, and the fifth 2 votes and 1 unit. The great powers are in the first group. Canada joined in the second group, and has with her India, Egypt, Mexico and Persia. Australia and New Zealand are in the fourth group, but I thought that Canada's agricultural importance in the world justified a higher place than that.

Italy's wealth and agricultural progress dates back to the days of Augustus Caesar. Many of you, perhaps, learned something of



agriculture from Virgil in his *Georgics*, which contain not only the general practice of agriculture but also the art and science of application of those principles to every-day life. If you would read those works you would find the principles which to-day are guiding the best scientific agricultural work, which have changed very little since that day.

Under the scourge of the wars of the middle ages, and the incursions of barbarians, Italy suffered greatly, but through it all she has been constantly a great agricultural country. Those of you who have seen it need not be reminded of the beautiful Lombardy plains, protected by continuous dykes and splendid engineering constructions to keep within bounds the waters of the River Po, but which are opened at certain seasons, and the country around, level, rich and fertile and heavily peopled, is given the fertilizing waters of the river, with such effect that they are able to raise four crops a year.

Southern Italy is rich in another way. On the great plains around the base of Vesuvius there are beautiful orchards and vineyards. I saw three crops growing at one time on some lands. The surface was covered with a crop of "garden truck." Then there were orchards, with fine trees, chiefly olives, and these were festooned with grape vines climbing up the trunks and spreading from one tree to another like trellises. The garden truck was the second crop of the year, and earlier there had been a crop of grain, so that the one piece of land produced four crops a year, each of them of the highest quality and quantity we can conceive of. I suppose no greater richness exists than on the slopes of volcanic detritus around that great mountain, and the people are using it in a way that is a marvel and not surpassed anywhere in the world.

There are in Italy 70,000,000 acres, of which 50,000,000 are productive, largely in that way, with 10,000,000 mountainous land and another 10,000,000 acres of less productive land. We think we are a great wheat-producing country, and this year we have produced in Canada 169,000,000 bushels of wheat. You are proud of that, but Italy produced 172,000,000 bushels of wheat in that little peninsula.

And at the same time Italy produced 85,000,000 bushels of maize, 1,200,000,000 gallons of wine, 62,000,000 gallons of oil and 14,000,000 pounds of tobacco.

To do this, great engineering works were necessary. Italy is a narrow country with a line of mountains down the middle and the

fertile lands between them and the sea on either side and many mountain streams. The courses of these streams had to be protected from spring torrents and the waters conserved for use in the dry seasons, and immense engineering works have been constructed to do this, so as to retain that fertility and enable the raising of these crops. There are dykes along the river banks to prevent overflow, reservoirs to retain the water for the dry time, and other similar works, in which respect Italy is unique and pre-eminent.

What has been the development of Italy lately? In 1850 she had 27,000,000 people and in 1907 she had 34,000,000, a very respectable increase. But when you take into account the tremendous emigration from that country to all parts of the world, running to as much as 600,000 souls a year for some years back, you can better understand what that increase of home population means.

Italy to-day is rich and prosperous. We have an idea here she is poor. No, she is rich. Her bonds, which a few years ago were below par, are quoted at 104. And a few years ago these were 5 per cent. bonds, but a few years ago there was a consolidation and reorganization of her finances with a conversion of the debt, and to-day that debt is at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. instead of the 5 per cent. of a few years ago and yet the consolidated bonds are at 104 instead of 71.

Last year Italy had a surplus of 91,000,000 lira of 5 to the dollar. In 1897, 10 years before, it was only 9,000,000 lira.

And about commerce? We boast of the increase of our commerce. Looking at the commerce of Canada from 1895 to 1907 and taking 1 as the statement of it 12 years ago, last year it was 2.90, or nearly three times as great. How does Italy compare? Taking again 1 as the basis for 1895, Italy in 1907 was 2.07, Austria 1.70, the United States 1.95 and Germany 2.09; so that Italy's increase was the greatest of any European country, except Germany.

And as to our commerce with Italy. The people of Italy are much interested in Canada, and many of her people are here. They also have a large productive capacity of material that sells, and want to import other goods from us. There are certain things we could send them and take their exports in return. Notwithstanding her immense wheat production, Italy last year imported \$35,000,000 worth of wheat, \$3,000,000 worth of horses, \$2,000,000 worth of maize, \$13,000,000 of fish, \$22,000,000 of lumber and \$52,000,000 of coal, \$3,000,000 of pulp and \$7,500,000 of paper. Every one of

these items are things we could send to Italy, and we might well have a large trade, as the importation of these things in Italy is increasing.

And Italy's exports were, olive oil \$10,000,000, wines \$8,000,000, citrous fruits \$7,000,000, dried fruits \$8,000,000, silk \$18,500,000. All these are largely imported by Canada, and if we can make satisfactory reciprocal arrangements, which the Italian government is anxious to do, there is no reason why our trade with Italy should not be greatly stimulated.

England sends nearly all the coal to Italy, \$52,000,000 worth a year. There is no reason why our coal from the Maritime Provinces should not be laid down in Italy just as cheap as that from the mother country, and I believe the quality is sufficiently good for the Italian market.

Italian commerce is increasing enormously. In 1903 her imports were \$362,000,000 and in 1907 \$576,000,000. Her exports in 1903 were \$300,000,000 and in 1907 \$400,000,000.

Such is Italy commercially and agriculturally. For a long time, Rome, where our Institute is situated, has played an important part in the history of the world. In the middle ages she was mistress of the world, and to-day she is the seat of the greatest church of the world. And now in this material age she is to be the seat of an organization of the great agricultural industry of the world, which I, as Minister of Agriculture, am inclined to look upon as the most important industry of the world.